

DAILY BULLETIN

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U.S. HAILS U.N. VOTE TO LIFT SANCTIONS ON IRAQ

Negroponte calls move “momentous event for the people of Iraq”

The United States expressed its appreciation to the U. N. Security Council May 22 following the overwhelming vote by 14 to zero vote of the 15-member council to approve the resolution lifting the sanctions imposed on Iraq since 1991. The other council member, Syria, did not attend the meeting.

U.S. Ambassador to the United Nations John Negroponte called the decision a “momentous event for the people of Iraq.”

Following is the text of Negroponte’s remarks:

United States Mission to the United Nations
USUN PRESS RELEASE May 22, 2003

Explanation of Vote by Ambassador John D. Negroponte, United States Permanent Representative to the United Nations, on the Resolution to Lift Sanctions on Iraq, Security Council, May 22, 2003

Thank you Mr. President, Mr. Secretary-General. The lifting of sanctions marks a momentous event for the people of Iraq. It is the turning of a historical page that should brighten the future of a people and a region.

The threatening actions and defiance of Saddam Hussein’s brutal regime prolonged the imposition of sanctions for nearly 13 years. Those sanctions have now

been lifted. The liberation of Iraq has cleared the path for today's action. We all witnessed an Iraqi state under Saddam Hussein that was unwilling adequately to feed its people, a state in which critical infrastructure projects were left to languish while luxurious palaces were built, and a state in which free political expression was cruelly repressed and punished. Together, this Council has taken decisive action to help the Iraqi people.

My government called for this vote this morning because we firmly believed that each additional day of debate over the language of this important text would further hinder recovery. The gas lines are long, despite blessedly little damage to Iraq's residual infrastructure. After more than a decade of being frozen out of the world economy, it is time for the Iraqi people to benefit from their natural resources.

President Bush and Prime Minister Blair said last month at Hillsborough that the United Nations should play a vital role in rebuilding Iraq.

In passing this resolution, we have achieved much for the Iraqi people. By recognizing the fluidity of the political situation and that decisions will be made on the ground, the Security Council has provided a flexible framework under Chapter VII for the Coalition Provisional Authority, member states, the United Nations and others in the international community to participate in the administration and reconstruction of Iraq and to assist the Iraqi people in determining their political future, establishing new institutions, and restoring economic prosperity to the country.

The resolution affirms our commitment to the development of an internationally recognized, representative government of Iraq. It creates a robust mandate for a Special Representative of the Secretary General, including to work with the people of Iraq, the Authority, and others concerned -- including neighboring states -- to help make this vision a reality.

The resolution establishes a framework for an orderly phase-out of the Oil-for-Food program, thereby preserving, for a transitional period, what has become an important safety net for the people of Iraq.

The resolution establishes transparency in all processes and United Nations participation in monitoring the sale of Iraqi oil resources and expenditure of oil proceeds. In that context, I am pleased to announce the creation of the Development Fund for Iraq in the Central Bank of Iraq.

As the resolution underlines, the Authority will disburse the funds only for the purposes it determines to benefit the Iraqi people.

The resolution lifts export restrictions to Iraq, with the exception of trade in arms and related materiel not required by the Coalition Provisional Authority. Aviation restrictions are also lifted, but Iraq's disarmament obligations remain and member states remain barred from assisting Iraq in acquiring weapons of mass destruction, proscribed missile systems or proceeding with civil nuclear activities so long as those restrictions remain in effect.

The resolution provides Iraq with adequate time to recover capacity eroded during the sanctions years, yet it preserves its obligations to Kuwait and others who suffered from Saddam Hussein's aggression dating from 1990. It addresses Iraq's sovereign debt, protection of Iraqi antiquities and accountability for serious violations of human rights and international humanitarian law by the previous regime. It also directs member states to act quickly to seize and return to the Iraqi people money stolen by Saddam Hussein's regime.

But, Mr. President, we cannot be complacent. Now that we have adopted this resolution, the work must begin on implementing it. The Secretariat and the new Special Representative of the Secretary General must prepare for their work on the urgent humanitarian, reconstruction and political tasks, to which it will contribute. Member states must work to fulfill the obligations and provisions contained in the resolution. For our part, in addition to our responsibilities in Iraq as leaders of the Coalition Provisional Authority, we will undertake to inform the Council on a quarterly basis of progress in implementing the resolution, in the spirit of Operational Paragraph 24.

The United States is appreciative of the constructive spirit with which the Council has considered and strengthened the provisions of the text we put forward with our co-sponsors. We look forward to working closely with all of you to implement this important decision.

Thank you very much, Mr. President.

NEW RESOLUTION DEFINES “VITAL ROLE” FOR U.N. IN IRAQ

State’s Holmes briefs May 23 at Foreign Press Center

The United Nations will play a “vital role” in coordinating humanitarian aid and reconstruction assistance in Iraq, says the State Department’s Assistant Secretary for International Organization Affairs, Kim Holmes.

U.N. Security Council Resolution 1483, which the council approved May 22, marks a “turning point in the historical page in Iraq,” Holmes told journalists at a Washington Foreign Press Center briefing the following day.

“The international community has come together to help Iraq build a better future, and the Security Council has demonstrated its unity and its resolve,” said Holmes of the council’s 14 to 0 vote in favor of the resolution.

In addition to ending nearly 13 years of economic sanctions, Holmes noted that the resolution supports the establishment of a transitional administration run by Iraqis, encourages the international community to support Iraq’s reconstruction, and asks the U.N. secretary general to appoint a Special Representative to coordinate U.N. activities to assist Iraq.

He also noted that the resolution recognizes the authority of coalition forces under the Fourth Geneva Convention as an “occupying power.”

As an “occupying power” or provisional authority, Holmes said, the coalition has the “rights and obligations” to take the lead during the interim period, not only in reconstructing and rebuilding Iraq in the near-term, but also in creating a process by which Iraqis can choose their own future government.

Holmes said the U.N. special representative will support the authority in these efforts and that the authority will work closely with the special representative in a “transparent process” that will allow Iraq’s people to choose their own future government.

The resolution “lays out the principles that stress the right of the Iraqi people to fully determine their own political future and to control their own natural resources,” said Holmes.

The resolution also establishes a “Development Fund for Iraq” to be held in the central bank of Iraq, through which Iraqi oil revenues from export sales will be deposited.

According to the resolution, the development fund is to be used to meet the humanitarian needs of the Iraqi people, for the economic reconstruction and repair of Iraq’s infrastructure, for the continued disarmament of Iraq, for the costs of Iraqi civilian administration, and “for other purposes benefiting the people of Iraq.”

The fund will be monitored by an international board that includes representatives from the U.N. Secretary General, the Arab Fund for Social and Economic Development, the IMF and the World Bank. Independent public accountants will report to the board on transactional transparency.

Holmes said the board will have auditing and monitoring functions to ensure Iraqi revenues are spent on Iraqi reconstruction. While reporting requirements are not yet determined, Holmes said the fund’s activities would be carried out in “a transparent and efficient and legal manner.”

Asked to clarify the resolution’s definition of “other purposes benefiting the people of Iraq” and whether the development fund might be used to finance the “military occupation of Iraq,” Holmes said the U.S. does not envision any of the development funds being used to fund “military occupation or military purposes.”

“It [the Development Fund for Iraq] can be used for civil administration but not for funding the military side of the problem,” he said.

In response to a questioner charging that the coalition entered Iraq because of proceeds it could derive from Iraqi oil revenues, Holmes said, “this is clearly not the view of the Security Council.”

“This resolution requires adequate international transparent oversight of the use of these funds. And we have made it clear time and time again, and I’ve made it clear here, that our presence in Iraq is temporary,” added Holmes.

The United States, he said, would be in Iraq “as long as necessary” to provide the basic security and stability in which a political process can be created by the Iraqi

people to create their own government, but “not a day longer.”

“It’s time to try to get moving,” he said, “and get...these problems solved for the Iraqi people.”

U.S. REAFFIRMS SUPPORT FOR INTERNATIONAL DEMINING EFFORTS

Official condemns attacks on demining workers in Afghanistan

The United States -- working with other members of the international community -- is determined to help increase security and stability in post conflict environments by finding and removing landmines and other unexploded ordnance, according to a State Department demining official.

Donald Patierno, director of the State Department’s Office of Humanitarian Demining Programs, said that “nearly 60 nations around the world are dealing with the menace posed by landmines” and that Afghanistan is a prime example of this difficult issue.

Patierno said that landmines and other unexploded ordnance pose a daunting challenge in Afghanistan and that they “threaten the very lives of the Afghan people, hamper the provision of humanitarian assistance, and play havoc with (the country’s) efforts to reconstitute its war-torn infrastructure and economy.”

He noted that progress is being made and that mine risk education programs provided to more than seven million people have lowered the landmine casualty rate by approximately 50 percent, adding that in addition to reducing casualties, the demining program provides hope for a future devoid of violence.

Patierno, who spoke May 21 at an event to support the non-governmental organization Roots of Peace, said it is despicable that the highly skilled Afghan deminers who are risking their lives to improve conditions in their country are now threatened by random acts of terror and intimidation. He said there is evidence that the Taliban has adopted a deliberate strategy of explicitly targeting

national and international members of the humanitarian aid community, stressing that the “recent loss of deminers to these acts of cowardice cannot be allowed to stop their important work.”

Patierno also said that the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) is providing an additional 400 armed guards for the protection of humanitarian organizations in Afghanistan and that the government of Afghanistan is providing 100 soldiers to focus on areas most likely to be at risk of attack.

He said “the government of Afghanistan and the U.N. Mine Action Program director are instituting prudent measures to provide the security conditions necessary for mine action” and expressed hope that these measures will soon allow Mine Action Program Afghanistan (MAPA) to redirect its resources back to the affected areas “so that Afghanistan’s impressive demining capacity will once again benefit the entire country”.

Patierno applauded the efforts of Roots of Peace, which in partnership with HALO trust -- an international mine clearance organization -- has been instrumental in clearing land for agricultural production. As a result, he said, more than 1.8 million refugees have returned home and MAPA has been able to provide employment opportunities to over 9,200 farmers and industrial workers, resulting in greatly increased agricultural and livestock production.

Patierno also noted that the United States has been providing support to the mine clearing program in Afghanistan continuously for nearly 14 years, and that \$50 million has been provided during that period.

USAID AIRLIFTS RELIEF SUPPLIES TO ALGERIA

Shelter, medical and financial support for earthquake relief

The U.S. Agency for International Development announced May 23, 2003 that it is airlifting blankets, tents and medical supplies to Algeria to help meet the needs of the victims of a severe earthquake May 21. In addition to the emergency supplies, USAID released \$50,000 to the Algerian Red Crescent Society for relief efforts.

Following is the text of the USAID press release, May 23, 2003.

Washington, DC -- In response to the devastating 6.7 magnitude earthquake in Algeria on Wednesday, the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) is airlifting 6,000 blankets, 3 medical supply kits (each kit benefits 10,000 people for 3 months) and 600 tents for the earthquake-affected population. All relief supplies will come out of USAID stockpiles in Pisa, Italy. In addition, USAID also released \$50,000 to the Algerian Red Crescent Society for emergency relief supplies.

The Government of Algeria reported preliminary estimates of 800 people killed, 5,600 injured, and approximately 10,000 left homeless, but numbers may continue to rise. USAID will continue to monitor casualty and damage reports, and coordinate with the U.S. Embassy in Algeria to ensure that humanitarian needs are being met.

According to the U.S. Geological Survey, the epicenter of the earthquake was 45 miles (75 kilometers) east of Algiers, the capital, near the town of Thenia. The cities of Algiers, Bourmedes and Rouiba were most affected by the quake. A hospital collapsed in Bourmedes, 30 miles (50 kilometers) east of Algiers, and telecommunications in the region were severely disrupted. At least ten aftershocks occurred after the initial quake, including three with magnitudes greater than 5.0, in heavily populated areas. The aftershocks have hampered rescue efforts. This was the biggest earthquake to hit Algeria since 1980.

Please Note: Most texts and transcripts mentioned in the U.S. Mission Daily Bulletin are available via our homepage www.usmission.ch. Select "Washington File" from the drop-down menu under "News."